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Carman, Bliss

Ballads and lyrics

Ballads
and Lyrics
Bliss Carman





WORKS BY BLISS CARMAN

PUBLISHED BY ELKIN MATHEWS

VIGO STREET, LONDON, W.

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LONDON: ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET, W.



BALLADS AND LYRICS

0

BALLADS AND LYRICS

BY

BLISS CARMAN

Have little care that life is brief,
And less that art is long;
Success is in the silences
Though fame is in the song.

LONDON

A. H. BULLEN

18 CECIL COURT, W.C.

1902



Edinburgh : T. and A. CONSTABLE, (late) Printers to Her Majesty

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Some of the following 'Ballads and Lyrics' have previously appeared in the volumes entitled 'Songs from Vagabondia,' 'More Songs from Vagabondia,' 'Ballads of Lost Haven,' and 'By the Aurelian Wall'; others are reprinted from 'Harper's Magazine,' 'The Atlantic,' and 'Poet-Lore'; and a few are now printed for the first time.

The Nancy's Pride

ON the long slow heave of a lazy sea,
To the flap of an idle sail,
The Nancy's Pride went out on the tide ;
And the skipper stood by the rail.

All down, all down by the sleepy town,
With the hollyhocks a-row
In the little poppy gardens,
The sea had her in tow.

They let her slip by the breathing rip,
Where the bell is never still,
And over the sounding harbour bar,
And under the harbour hill.

She melted into the dreaming noon,
Out of the drowsy land,
In sight of a flag of goldy hair,
To the kiss of a girlish hand.

For the lass who hailed the lad who sailed,
Was—who but his April bride ?
And of all the fleet of Grand Latite,
Her pride was the Nancy's Pride.

So the little vessel faded down
With her creaking boom a-swing,
Till a wind from the deep came up with a creep,
And caught her wing and wing.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

She made for the lost horizon line,
Where the clouds a-castled lay,
While the boil and seethe of the open sea
Hung on her frothing way.

She lifted her hull like a breasting gull
Where the rolling-valleys be,
And dipped where the shining porpoises
Put ploughshares through the sea.

A fading sail on the far sea-line,
About the turn of the tide,
As she made for the Banks on her maiden cruise
Was the last of the Nancy's Pride.

To-day a boy with goldy hair,
In a garden of Grand Latite,
From his mother's knee looks out to sea
For the coming of the fleet.

They all may home on a sleepy tide,
To the flap of the idle sail ;
But it's never again the Nancy's Pride
That answers a human hail.

They all may home on a sleepy tide
To the sag of an idle sheet ;
But it's never again the Nancy's Pride
That draws men down the street.

On the Banks to-night a fearsome sight
The fishermen behold,
Keeping the ghost-watch in the moon
When the small hours are cold.

THE NANCY'S PRIDE

When the light wind veers, and the white fog clears,
They see by the after rail
An unknown schooner creeping up
With mildewed spar and sail.

Her crew lean forth by the rotting shrouds,
With the Judgment in their face ;
And to their mates ' God save you !'
Have never a word of grace.

Then into the gray they sheer away,
On the awful polar tide ;
And the sailors know they have seen the wraith
Of the missing Nancy's Pride.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

The Gravedigger

OH, the shambling sea is a sexton old,
And well his work is done.
With an equal grave for lord and knave,
He buries them every one.

Then hoy and rip, with a rolling hip,
He makes for the nearest shore ;
And God, who sent him a thousand ship,
Will send him a thousand more ;
But some he'll save for a bleaching grave,
And shoulder them in to shore,—
Shoulder them in, shoulder them in,
Shoulder them in to shore.

Oh, the ships of Greece and the ships of Tyre
Went out, and where are they ?
In the port they made, they are delayed
With the ships of yesterday.

He followed the ships of England far,
As the ships of long ago ;
And the ships of France they led him a dance,
But he laid them all arow.

Oh, a loafing, idle lubber to him
Is the sexton of the town ;
For sure and swift, with a guiding lift,
He shovels the dead men down.

THE GRAVEDIGGER

But though he delves so fierce and grim,
His honest graves are wide,
As well they know who sleep below
The dredge of the deepest tide.

Oh, he works with a rollicking stave at lip,
And loud is the chorus skirled ;
With the burly rote of his rumbling throat
He batters it down the world.

He learned it once in his father's house,
Where the ballads of eld were sung ;
And merry enough is the burden rough,
But no man knows the tongue.

Oh, fair, they say, was his bride to see,
And wilful she must have been,
That she could bide at his gruesome side
When the first red dawn came in.

And sweet, they say, is her kiss to those
She greets to his border home ;
And softer than sleep her hand's first sweep
That beckons, and they come.

Oh, crooked is he, but strong enough
To handle the tallest mast ;
From the royal barque to the slaver dark,
He buries them all at last.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

He woos the Poppy and weds the Peach,
Inveigles Daffodilly,
And then like a tramp abandons each
For the gorgeous Canada Lily.

There's not a soul in the garden world
But wishes the day were shorter,
When Mariner B. puts out to sea
With the wind in the proper quarter.

Or, so they say ! But I have my doubts ;
For the flowers are only human,
And the valour and gold of a vagrant bold
Were always dear to woman.

He dares to boast, along the coast,
The beauty of Highland Heather,—
How he and she, with night on the sea,
Lay out on the hills together.

His morals are mixed, but his will is fixed ;
He prospers after his kind,
And follows an instinct, compass-sure,
The philosophers call blind.

And that is why, when he comes to die,
He'll have an easier sentence
Than some one I know who thinks just so,
And then leaves room for repentance.

SPRING SONG

Spring Song

MAKE me over, mother April,
When the sap begins to stir !
When thy flowery hand delivers
All the mountain-prisoned rivers,
And thy great heart beats and quivers
To revive the days that were,
Make me over, mother April,
When the sap begins to stir !

Take my dust and all my dreaming,
Count my heart-beats one by one,
Send them where the winters perish ;
Then some golden noon cherish
And restore them in the sun,
Flower and scent and dust and dreaming,
With their heart-beats every one !

Make me of thy seed to-morrow,
When the sap begins to stir !
Tawny light-foot, sleepy bruin,
Bright-eyes in the orchard ruin,
Gnarl the good life goes askew in,
Whisky-jack, or tanager,—
Make me anything to-morrow,
When the sap begins to stir !

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Make me even (How do I know?)
Like my friend the gargoyle there ;
It may be the heart within him
Swells that doltish hands should pin him
Fixed for ever in mid-air.
Make me even sport for swallows,
Like the soaring gargoyle there !

Give me the old clue to follow,
Through the labyrinth of night !
Clod of clay with heart of fire,
Things that burrow and aspire,
With the vanishing desire,
For the perishing delight,—
Only the old clue to follow,
Through the labyrinth of night !

Make me over, mother April,
When the sap begins to stir !
Fashion me from swamp or meadow,
Garden plot or ferny shadow,
Hyacinth or humble burr !
Make me over, mother April,
When the sap begins to stir !

Make me over in the morning
From the rag-bag of the world !
Scraps of dream and duds of daring,
Home-brought stuff from far sea-faring,
Faded colours once so flaring,
Shreds of banners long since furled !
Hues of ash and glints of glory,
In the rag-bag of the world !

SPRING SONG

Let me taste the old immortal
Indolence of life once more ;
Not recalling nor foreseeing,
Let the great slow joys of being
Well my heart through as of yore !
Let me taste the old immortal
Indolence of life once more !

Give me the old drink for rapture,
The delirium to drain,
All my fellows drank in plenty
At the Three Score Inns and Twenty
From the mountains to the main !
Give me the old drink for rapture,
The delirium to drain !

Only make me over, April,
When the sap begins to stir !
Make me man or make me woman,
Make me oaf or ape or human,
Cup of flower or cone of fir ;
Make me anything but neuter
When the sap begins to stir !

BALLADS AND LYRICS

The Joys of the Road

Now the joys of the road are chiefly these :
A crimson touch on the hard-wood trees ;

A vagrant's morning wide and blue,
In early fall, when the wind walks, too ;

A shadowy highway cool and brown,
Alluring up and enticing down

From rippled water to dappled swamp,
From purple glory to scarlet pomp ;

The outward eye, the quiet will,
And the striding heart from hill to hill ;

The tempter apple over the fence ;
The cobweb bloom on the yellow quince ;

The palish asters along the wood,—
A lyric touch of the solitude ;

An open hand, an easy shoe,
And a hope to make the day go through,—

Another to sleep with, and a third
To wake me up at the voice of a bird ;

THE JOYS OF THE ROAD

A scrap of gossip at the ferry ;
A comrade neither glum nor merry,

Who never defers and never demands,
But, smiling, takes the world in his hands,—

Seeing it good as when God first saw
And gave it the weight of his will for law.

And O the joy that is never won,
But follows and follows the journeying sun,

By marsh and tide, by meadow and stream,
A will-o'-the-wind, a light-o'-dream,

The racy smell of the forest loam,
When the stealthy, sad-heart leaves go home ;

The broad gold wake of the afternoon ;
The silent fleck of the cold new moon ;

The sound of the hollow sea's release
From stormy tumult to starry peace ;

With only another league to wend ;
And two brown arms at the journey's end !

These are the joys of the open road—
For him who travels without a load.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

The Mendicants

WE are as mendicants who wait
Along the roadside in the sun.
Tatters of yesterday and shreds
Of morrow clothe us every one.

And some are dotards, who believe
And glory in the days of old ;
While some are dreamers, harping still
Upon an unknown age of gold.

Hopeless or witless ! Not one heeds,
As lavish Time comes down the way
And tosses in the suppliant hat
One great new-minted gold To-day.

Ungrateful heart and grudging thanks,
His beggar's wisdom only sees
Housing and bread and beer enough ;
He knows no other things than these.

O foolish ones, put by your care !
Where wants are many, joys are few ;
And at the wilding springs of peace,
God keeps an open house for you.

But that some Fortunatus' gift
Is lying there within his hand,
More costly than a pot of pearls,
His dulness does not understand.

THE MENDICANTS

And so his creature heart is filled ;
His shrunken self goes starved away.
Let him wear brand-new garments still,
Who has a threadbare soul, I say.

But there be others, happier few,
The vagabondish sons of God,
Who know the by-ways and the flowers,
And care not how the world may plod.

They idle down the traffic lands,
And loiter through the woods with spring ;
To them the glory of the earth
Is but to hear a bluebird sing.

They too receive each one his Day ;
But their wise heart knows many things
Beyond the sating of desire,
Above the dignity of kings.

One I remember kept his coin,
And laughing flipped it in the air ;
But when two strolling pipe-players
Came by, he tossed it to the pair.

Spendthrift of joy, his childish heart
Danced to their wild outlandish bars ;
Then supperless he laid him down
That night, and slept beneath the stars.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

The Faithless Lover

I

O LIFE, dear Life, in this fair house
Long since did I, it seems to me,
In some mysterious doleful way
Fall out of love with thee.

For, Life, thou art become a ghost,
A memory of days gone by,
A poor forsaken thing between
A heartache and a sigh.

And now, with shadows from the hills
Thronging the twilight, wraith on wraith,
Unlock the door and let me go
To thy dark rival Death !

II

O Heart, dear Heart, in this fair house
Why hast thou wearied and grown tired,
Between a morning and a night,
Of all thy soul desired ?

THE FAITHLESS LOVER

Fond one, who cannot understand,
Even these shadows on the floor,
Yet must be dreaming of dark loves
And joys beyond my door !

But I am beautiful past all
The timid tumult of thy mood,
And thou returning not must still
Be mine in solitude.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

In the Wings

THE play is Life ; and this round earth
The narrow stage whereon
We act before an audience
Of actors dead and gone.

There is a figure in the wings
That never goes away,
And though I cannot see his face,
I shudder while I play.

His shadow looms behind me here,
Or capers at my side ;
And when I mouth my lines in dread,
Those scornful lips deride.

Sometimes a hooting laugh breaks out,
And startles me alone ;
While all my fellows, wondering
At my stage-fright, play on.

I fear that when my Exit comes,
I shall encounter there,
Stronger than fate, or time, or love
And sterner than despair,

The Final Critic of the craft,
As stage tradition tells ;
And yet—perhaps 'twill only be
The jester with his bells.

HACK AND HEW

Hack and Hew

HACK and Hew were the sons of God
In the earlier earth than now ;
One at his right hand, one at his left,
To obey as he taught them how.

And Hack was blind and Hew was dumb,
But both had the wild, wild heart ;
And God's calm will was their burning will,
And the gist of their toil was art.

They made the moon and the belted stars,
They set the sun to ride ;
They loosed the girdle and veil of the sea,
The wind and the purple tide.

Both flower and beast beneath their hands
To beauty and speed outgrew,—
The furious fumbling hand of Hack,
And the glorying hand of Hew.

Then, fire and clay, they fashioned a man,
And painted him rosy brown ;
And God himself blew hard in his eyes :
'Let them burn till they smoulder down !'

And 'There !' said Hack, and 'There !' thought
Hew,
'We'll rest, for our toil is done.'
But 'Nay,' the Master Workman said,
'For your toil is just begun.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

'And ye who served me of old as God
Shall serve me anew as man,
Till I compass the dream that is in my heart,
And perfect the vaster plan.'

And still the craftsman over his craft,
In the vague white light of dawn,
With God's calm will for his burning will,
While the mounting day comes on,

Yearning, wind-swift, indolent, wild,
Toils with those shadowy two,—
The faltering restless hand of Hack
And the tireless hand of Hew.

HEM AND HAW

Hem and Haw

HEM and Haw were the sons of sin,
Created to shally and shirk ;
Hem lay 'round and Haw looked on
While God did all the work.

Hem was a fogey, and Haw was a prig,
For both had the dull, dull mind ;
And whenever they found a thing to do,
They yammered and went it blind.

Hem was the father of bigots and bores ;
As the sands of the sea were they.
And Haw was the father of all the tribe
Who criticise to-day.

But God was an artist from the first,
And knew what he was about ;
While over his shoulder sneered these two,
And advised him to rub it out.

They prophesied ruin ere man was made :
'Such folly must surely fail !'
And when he was done, 'Do you think, my Lord,
He's better without a tail ?'

BALLADS AND LYRICS

And still in the honest working world,
With posture and hint and smirk,
These sons of the devil are standing by
While Man does all the work.

They balk endeavour and baffle reform
In the sacred name of law ;
And over the quavering voice of Hem
Is the droning voice of Haw.

THE DUSTMAN

The Dustman

'DUSTMAN, dustman !'
Through the deserted square he cries,
And babies put their rosy fists
Into their eyes.

There's nothing out of No-man's-land
So drowsy since the world began,
As 'Dustman, dustman,
Dustman.'

He goes his village round at dusk
From door to door, from day to day ;
And when the children hear his step
They stop their play.

'Dustman, dustman !'
Far up the street he is descried,
And soberly the twilight games
Are laid aside.

'Dustman, dustman !'
There, Drowsyhead, the old refrain,
'Dustman, dustman !'
It goes again.

Dustman, dustman,
Hurry by and let me sleep.
When most I wish for you to come,
You always creep.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Dustman, dustman,
And when I want to play some more,
You never then are farther off
Than the next door.

‘Dustman, dustman!’
He beckles down the echoing curb,
A step that neither hopes nor hates
Ever disturb.

‘Dustman, dustman!’
He never varies from one pace,
And the monotony of time
Is in his face.

And some day, with more potent dust,
Brought from his home beyond the deep,
And gently scattered on our eyes,
We, too, shall sleep,—

Hearing the call we know so well
Fade softly out as it began,
‘Dustman, dustman,
Dustman!’

THE SLEEPERS

The Sleepers

THE tall carnations down the garden walks
Bowed on their stalks.

Said Jock-a-dreams to John-a-nods,
'What are the odds
That we shall wake up here within the sun,
When time is done,
And pick up all the treasures one by one
Our hands let fall in sleep?' 'You have begun
To mutter in your dreams,'
Said John-a-nods to Jock-a-dreams,
And they both slept again.

The tall carnations in the sunset glow
Burned row on row.

Said John-a-nods to Jock-a-dreams,
'To me it seems
A thousand years since last you stirred and spoke,
And I awoke.
Was that the wind then trying to provoke
His brothers in their blessed sleep?' 'They choke,
Who mutter in their nods,'
Said Jock-a-dreams to John-a-nods.
And they both slept again.

The tall carnations only heard a sigh
Of dusk go by.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

A Captain of the Press-Gang

SHIPMATE, leave the ghostly shadows,
Where thy boon companions throng !
We will put to sea together
Through the twilight with a song.

Leering closer, rank and girding,
In this Black Port where we bide,
Reel a thousand flaring faces ;
But escape is on the tide.

Let the tap-rooms of the city
Reek till the red dawn comes round.
There is better wine in plenty
On the cruise where we are bound.

I've aboard a hundred messmates
Better than these 'long-shore knaves.
There is wreckage on the shallows ;
It's the open sea that saves.

Hark, lad, dost not hear it calling ?
That's the voice thy father knew,
When he took the King's good cutlass
In his grip, and fought it through.

Who would palter at press-money
When he heard that sea-cry vast ?
That's the call makes lords of lubbers,
When they ship before the mast.

A CAPTAIN OF THE PRESS-GANG

Let thy cronies of the tavern
Keep their kisses bought with gold ;
On the high seas there are regions
Where the heart is never old,

Where the great winds every morning
Sweep the sea-floor clean and white,
And upon the steel-blue arches
Burnish the great stars of night ;

There the open hand will lose not,
Nor the loosened tongue betray.
Signed, and with our sailing orders,
We will clear before the day ;

On the shining yards of heaven
See a wider dawn unfurled. . . .
The eternal slaves of beauty
Are the masters of the world.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

In the Workshop

ONCE in the Workshop, ages ago,
The clay was wet and the fire was low.

And He who was bent on fashioning man
Moulded a shape from a clod,
And put the loyal heart therein ;
While another stood watching by.

‘What’s that?’ said Beelzebub.
‘A lover,’ said God.
And Beelzebub frowned, for he knew that kind.

And then God fashioned a fellow shape
As lithe as a willow rod,
And gave it the merry roving eye
And the range of the open road.

‘What’s that?’ said Beelzebub.
‘A vagrant,’ said God.
And Beelzebub smiled, for he knew that kind.

And last of all God fashioned a form,
And gave it, what was odd,
The loyal heart, and the roving eye ;
And he whistled, light of care.

‘What’s that?’ said Beelzebub.
‘A poet,’ said God.
And Beelzebub frowned, for he did not know.

IN THE HOUSE OF IDIEDAILY

In the House of Idiedaily

*Oh, but life went gaily, gaily,
In the house of Idiedaily!*

There were always throats to sing
Down the river-banks with spring,

When the stir of heart's desire
Set the sapling's heart on fire.

Bobolincols in the meadows,
Leisure in the purple shadows,

Till the poppies without number
Bowed their heads in crimson slumber,

And the twilight came to cover
Every unreluctant lover.

Not a night but some brown maiden
Bettered all the dusk she strayed in,

While the roses in her hair
Bankrupted oblivion there.

*Oh, but life went gaily, gaily,
In the house of Idiedaily!*

But this hostelry, The Barrow,
With its chambers, bare and narrow,

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Mean, ill-windowed, damp, and wormy,
Where the silence makes you squirmy,

And the guests are never seen to,
Is a vile place, a mere lean-to,

Not a traveller speaks well of,
Even worse than I heard tell of,

Mouldy, ramshackle, and foul—
What a dwelling for a soul !

*Oh, but life went gaily, gaily,
In the house of Idiedaily !*

There the hearth was always warm
From the slander of the storm.

There your comrade was your neighbour,
Living on to-morrow's labour.

And the board was always steaming,
Though Sir Ringlets might be dreaming.

Not a plate but scoffed at porridge,
Not a cup but floated borage.

There were always jugs of sherry
Waiting for the makers merry,

And the dark Burgundian wine
That would make a fool divine.

*Oh, but life went gaily, gaily,
In the house of Idiedaily !*

RESIGNATION

Resignation

WHEN I am only fit to go to bed,
Or hobble out to sit within the sun,
Ring down the curtain, say the play is done,
And the last petals of the poppy shed !

I do not want to live when I am old,
I have no use for things I cannot love ;
And when the day that I am talking of
(Which God forbend !) is come, it will be cold.

But if there is another place than this,
Where all the men will greet me as ' Old Man,'
And all the women wrap me in a smile,
Where money is more useless than a kiss,
And good wine is not put beneath the ban,
I will go there and stay a little while.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

In a Copy of Browning

BROWNING, old fellow,
Your leaves grow yellow,
Beginning to mellow
As seasons pass.
Your cover is wrinkled,
And stained and sprinkled,
And warped and crinkled
From sleep on the grass.

Is it a wine stain,
Or only a pine stain,
That makes such a fine stain
On your dull blue,—
Got as we numbered
The clouds that lumbered
Southward and slumbered
When day was through?

What is the dear mark
There like an earmark,
Only a tear mark
A woman let fall?—
As bending over
She bade me discover,
'Who *plays* the lover,
He loses all!'

IN A COPY OF BROWNING

With you for teacher
We learned love's feature
In every creature
That roves or grieves ;
When winds were brawling,
Or bird-folk calling,
Or leaf-folk falling,
About our eaves.

No law must straiten
The ways they wait in,
Whose spirits greaten
And hearts aspire.
The world may dwindle,
And summer brindle,
So love but kindle
The soul to fire.

Here many a red line,
Or pencilled headline,
Shows love could wed line
To golden sense ;
And something better
Than wisdom's fetter
Has made your letter
Dense to the dense.

No April robin,
Nor clacking bobbin,
Can make of Dobbin
A Pegasus ;
But Nature's pleading
To man's unheeding,
Your subtile reading
Made clear to us.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

You made us farers
And equal sharers
With homespun wearers
In home-made joys ;
You made us princes
No plea convinces
That spirit winces
At dust and noise.

When Fate was nagging,
And days were dragging,
And fancy lagging,
You gave it scope,—
When eaves were drippy,
And pavements slippery,—
From Lippo Lippi
To Evelyn Hope.

When winter's arrow
Pierced to the marrow,
And thought was narrow,
You gave it room ;
We guessed the warder
On Roland's border,
And helped to order
The Bishop's Tomb.

When winds were harshish,
And ways were marshish,
We found with Karshish
Escape at need ;
Were bold with Waring
In far seafaring,
And strong in sharing
Ben Ezra's creed.

IN A COPY OF BROWNING

We felt the menace
Of lovers pen us,
Afloat in Venice
Devising fibs ;
And little mattered
The rain that pattered,
While Blougram chattered
To Gigadibs.

And we too waited
With heart elated
And breathing bated,
For Pippa's song ;
Saw Satan hover,
With wings to cover
Porphyria's lover,
Pompilia's wrong.

Long thoughts were started,
When youth departed
From the half-hearted
Riccardi's bride ;
For, saith your fable,
Great Love is able
To slip the cable
And take the tide.

Or truth compels us
With Paracelsus,
Till nothing else is
Of worth at all.
Del Sarto's vision
Is our own mission,
And art's ambition
Is God's own call.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Through all the seasons,
You gave us reasons
For splendid treasons
To doubt and fear ;
Bade no foot falter,
Though weaklings palter,
And friendships alter
From year to year.

Since first I sought you,
Found you and bought you,
Hugged you and brought you
Home from Cornhill,
While some upbraid you,
And some parade you,
Nine years have made you
My master still.

MR. MOON

Mr. Moon : A Song of the
Little People

O MOON, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down?
Down on the hilltop,
Down in the glen,
Out in the clearin',
To play with little men?
Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down?

O Mr. Moon,
Hurry up your stumps!
Don't you hear Bullfrog
Callin' to his wife,
And old black Cricket
A-wheezin' at his fife?
Hurry up your stumps,
And get on your pumps!
Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down?

O Mr. Moon,
Hurry up along!
The reeds in the current
Are whisperin' slow;
The river's a-wimplin'
To and fro.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Hurry up along,
Or you'll miss the song !
Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down ?

O Mr. Moon,
We're all here !
Honey-bug, Thistledrift,
White-imp, Weird,
Wryface, Billiken,
Quidnunc, Queered ;
We're all here,
And the coast is clear !
Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down ?

O Mr. Moon,
We're the little men !
Dewlap, Pussymouse,
Ferntip, Freak,
Drink-again, Shambler,
Talkytalk, Squeak ;
Three times ten
Of us little men !
Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down ?

O Mr. Moon,
We're all ready !
Tallenough, Squaretoes,
Amble, Tip,
Buddybud, Heigho,
Little black Pip ;

MR. MOON

We're all ready,
And the wind walks steady !
Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down ?

O Mr. Moon,
We're thirty score ;
Yellowbeard, Piper,
Lieabed, Toots,
Meadowbee, Moonboy,
Bully-in-boots ;
Three times more
Than thirty score.
Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down ?

O Mr. Moon,
Keep your eye peeled ;
Watch out to windward,
Or you'll miss the fun,
Down by the acre
Where the wheat-waves run ;
Keep your eye peeled
For the open field.
Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down ?

O Mr. Moon,
There's not much time !
Hurry, if you're comin',
You lazy old bones !
You can sleep to-morrow
While the Buzbuz drones ;

BALLADS AND LYRICS

There's not much time
Till the church-bells chime.
Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down?

O Mr. Moon,
Just see the clover !
Soon we'll be going
Where the Gray Goose went
When all her money
Was spent, spent, spent !
Down through the clover,
When the revel's over !
Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down?

O Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down?
Down where the Good Folk
Dance in a ring,
Down where the Little Folk
Sing?
Moon, Mr. Moon,
When you comin' down?

IN A GARDEN

In a Garden

THOUGHT is a garden wide and old
For airy creatures to explore,
Where grow the great fantastic flowers
With truth for honey at the core.

There like a wild marauding bee
Made desperate by hungry fears,
From gorgeous *If* to dark *Perhaps*
I blunder down the dusk of years.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Above the Gaspereau

To H. E. C.

THERE are sunflowers too in my garden on top of the hill,
Where now in the early September the sun has his will—
The slow autumn sun that goes leisurely, taking his fill
Of life in the orchards and fir-woods so moveless and still ;
As if, should they stir, they might break some illusion and spill
The germ of their long summer musing on top of the hill.

The crowds of black spruces in tiers from the valley below,
Ranged round their sky-roofed coliseum, mount row after row.
How often there, rank above rank, they have watched for the slow
Silver-lanterned processions of twilight—the moon's come and go !
How often, as if they expected some bugle to blow,
Announcing a bringer of news they were breathless to know,
They have hushed every leaf,—to hear only the murmurous flow
Of the small mountain river sent up from the valley below !

How still through the sweet summer sun, through the soft summer rain,
They have stood there awaiting the summons should bid them attain
The freedom of knowledge, the last touch of truth to explain
The great golden gist of their brooding, the marvellous train
Of thought they have followed so far, been so strong to sustain,—
The white gospel of sun and the long revelations of rain !

Then the orchards that dot, all in order, the green valley floor,
Every tree with its boughs weighed to earth, like a tent from whose door
Not a lodger looks forth,—yet the signs are there gay and galore,
The great ropes of red fruitage and russet, crisp snow to the core.

ABOVE THE GASPEREAU

Can the dark-eyed Romany here have deserted of yore
Their camp at the coming of frost? Will they seek it no more?
Who dwells in St. Eulalie's village? Who knows the fine lore
Of the tribes of the apple-trees there on the green valley floor?

Who, indeed? From the blue mountain gorge to the dikes by the sea,
Goes that stilly wanderer, small Gaspereau; who but he
Should give the last hint of perfection, the touch that sets free
From the taut string of silence the whisper of beauties to be!
The very sun seems to have tarried, turned back a degree,
To lengthen out noon for the apple folk here by the sea.

What is it? Who comes? What's abroad on the blue mountain side?
A hush has been laid on the leaves and will not be defied.
Is the great Scarlet Hunter at last setting out on his ride
From the North with deliverance now? Were the lights we descried
Last night in the heavens his camp-fire seen far and wide,
The white signal of peace for whose coming the ages have cried?
'Expectancy lingers; fulfilment postponed,' I replied,
When soul said uneasily, 'Who is it haunts your hillside?'

All the while not a word from my sunflowers here on the hill.
And to-night when the stars over Blomidon flower and fill
The blue Northern garden of heaven, so pale and so still,
From the lordly king-aster Aldebaran there by the sill
Of the East, where the moonlight will enter, not one will fulfil
A lordlier lot than my sunflowers here on the hill.

So much for mere fact, mere impression. So much I portray
Of the atmosphere, colour, illusion of one autumn day
In the little Acadian valley above the Grand Pré;
Just the quiet of orchards and firs, where the sun had full sway,
And the river went trolling his soft wander-song to the bay,
While roseberry, aster, and sagaban tangled his way.
Be you their interpreter, reasoner; tell what they say,
These children of silence whose patient regard I portray.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

You Londoner, walking in Bishopsgate, strolling the Strand,
Some morning in autumn afford, at a fruit-dealer's stand,
The leisure to look at his apples there ruddy and tanned.
Then ask, when he's smiling to serve you, if choice can command
A Gravenstein grown oversea on Canadian land.
(And just for the whim's sake, for once, you'll have no other brand !)
How teach you to tell them? Pick one, and with that in your hand,
Bethink you a while as you turn again into the Strand.

'What if,' you will say,—so smooth in your hand it will lie,
So round and so firm, of so rich a red to the eye,
Like a dash of Fortuny, a tinge of some Indian dye,
While you turn it and toss, mark the bloom, ere you taste it and try—
'Now what if this grew where the same bright pavilion of sky
Is stretched o'er the valley and hillside he bids me descry,
The windless valley of peace, where the seasons go by,
And the river goes down through the orchards where long shadows lie !'

There's the fruit in your hand, in your ears is the roar of the street,
The pulse of an empire keeping its volume and beat,
Its sure come and go day and night, while we sleep or we eat.
Taste the apple, bite in to the juice—how abundant and sweet !
As sound as your own English heart, and wholesome as wheat,—
There grow no such apples as that in your Bishopsgate Street.

Or perhaps in St. Helen's Place, when your business is done
And the ledgers put by, you will think of the hundred and one
Commissions and errands to do ; but what under the sun
Was that, so important? Ah, yes ! the new books overrun
The old shelves. It is high time to order a new set begun.
Then off to the joiner's. You enter, to see his plane run
With a long high shriek through the lumber he's working upon.
Then he turns from his shavings to query what you would have done.

ABOVE THE GASPEREAU

But homeward 'tis you who make question. That song of the blade !
And the sharp sweet cry of the wood, what an answer it made !
What stories the joiner must hear, as he plies his clean trade,
Of all the wild life of the forest where long shadows wade
The untrodden moss, and the firs send a journeying shade
So slow through the valley so far from the song of his blade.

Come back to my orchards a moment. They 're waiting for you.
How still are the little gray leaves where the pippins peep through !
The boughs where the ribstons hang red are half breaking in two.
Above them September in magical soft Northern blue
Has woven the spell of her silence, like frost or like dew,
Yet warm as a poppy's red dream. When All Saints shall renew
The beauty of summer a while, will their dreaming come true ?
Ah, not of my Grand Pré they dream, nor your London and you !

Their life is their own, and the surge of it. All through the spring
They pushed forth their buds, and the rainbirds at twilight would sing.
They put forth their bloom, and the world was as fairy a thing
As a Japanese garden. Then midsummer came with the zing
And the clack of the locust ; then fruit time and coolness, to bring
This aftermath deep underfoot with its velvety spring.

And they all the while with the fatherly, motherly care,
Taking sap from the strength of the ground, taking sun from the air,
Taking chance of the frost and the worm, taking courage to dare,
Have given their life that the life might be goodly and fair
In their kind for the seasons to come, with good witness to bear
How the sturdy old race of the apples could give and not spare.
To-morrow the harvest begins. We shall rifle them there
Of the beautiful fruit of their bodies, the crown of their care.

How lovingly then shall the picker set hand to the bough !—
Bid it yield, ere the seed come to earth or the graft to the plough,

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Not only sweet life for its kind, as the instincts allow,
That savour and shape may survive generations from now,
But life to its kin who can say, 'I am stronger than thou,'—
Fulfilling a lordlier law than the law of the bough.

I heard before dawn, with planets beginning to quail,—
'Whoso hath life, let him give, that my purpose prevail ;
Whoso hath none, let him take, that his strength may be hale.
Behold, I have reckoned the tally, I keep the full tale.
Whoso hath love, let him give, lest his spirit grow stale ;
Whoso hath none, let him die ; he shall wither and fail.
Behold, I will plenish the loss at the turn of the scale.
He hath law to himself, who hath love ; ye shall hope and not quail.'

Then the sun arose, and my sunflowers here on the hill,
Like good little Catholics, turned to the East to fulfil
Their daily observance, receiving his peace and his will,—
The lord of their light who alone bids the darkness be nil,
The lord of their love who alone bids the life in them thrill ;
Undismayed and serene, they awaited him here on the hill.

Ah, the patience of earth ! Look down at the dark pointed firs ;
They are carved out of blackness ; one pattern recurs and recurs.
They crowd all the gullies and hillsides, the gashes and spurs,
As silent as death. What an image ! How nature avers
The goodness of calm with that taciturn beauty of hers !
As silent as sleep. Yet the life in them climbs and stirs.
They too have received the great law, know that haste but defers
The perfection of time,—the initiate gossamer firs.

So year after year, slow ring upon ring, they have grown,
Putting infinite long-loving care into leafage and cone,
By the old ancient craft of the earth they have pondered and known
In the dead of the hot summer noons, as still as a stone.

ABOVE THE GASPEREAU

Not for them the gay fruit of the thorn, nor the high scarlet roan,
Nor the plots of the deep orchard land where the apples are grown.

In winter the wind, all huddled and shuddering, came
To warm his old bones by the fires of sunset aflame
Behind the black house of the firs. When the moose-birds grew tame
In the lumberers' camps in the woods, what marvellous fame
His talk and the ice of his touch would spread and proclaim,
Of the berg and the floe and the lands without nation or name,
Where the earth and the sky, night and noon, north and south are the same,
The white and awful Nirvana of cold whence he came !

Then April, some twilight picked out with a great yellow star,
Returning, like Hylas long lost and come back with his jar
Of sweet living water at last, having wandered so far,
Leads the heart out of doors, and the eye to the point of a spar,
At whose base in the half-melted snow the first Mayflowers are,—
And there the first robin is pealing below the great star.

So soon, over-soon, the full summer. Within those dark boughs,
Deliberate and far, a faltering reed-note will rouse
The shy transports of earth, till the wood-creatures hear where they house,
And grow bold as the tremble-eared rabbits that nibble and mouse.
While up through the pasture-lot, startling the sheep as they browse,
Where kingbirds and warblers are piercing the heat's golden drowse,
Some girl, whom the sun has made tawny, the wind had to blowse,
Will come there to gentle her lover beneath those dark boughs.

Then out of the hush, when the grasses are frosty and old,
Will the chickadee's tiny alarm against winter be rolled ;
And soon, when the ledges and ponds are bitten with cold,
The honk of the geese, that wander-cry stirring and bold,
Will sound through the night, where those hardy mariners hold
The uncharted course through the dark, as it was from of old.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Ah, the life of the woods, how they share and partake of it all,
These evergreens, silent as Indians, solemn and tall !
From the goldenwing's first far-heard awakening call,
The serene flute of the thrush in his high beech hall,
And the pipe of the frog, to the bannered approach of the fall,
And the sullen wind, when snow arrives on a squall,
Trooping in all night from the North with news would appal
Any outposts but these ; with a zest they partake of it all.

Lo, out of the hush they seem to mount and aspire !
From basement to tip they have builded, with heed to go higher,
One circlet of branches a year with their lift of green spire.
Nay, rather they seem to repose, having done with desire,
Awaiting the frost, with the fruit scarlet-bright on the brier,
Each purpose fulfilled, each ardour that bade them aspire.

Then hate be afar from the bite of the axe that shall fell
These keepers of solitude, makers of quiet, who dwell
On the Slopes of the North. And clean be the hand that shall quell
The tread of the sap that was wont to go mounting so well,
Round on round with the sun in a spiral, slow cell after cell,
As a bellringer climbs in a turret. That resinous smell
From the eighth angel's hand might have risen with the incense to swell
His offering in heaven, when the half-hour's silence befell.

Behold, as the prayers of the saints that went up to God's knees
In John's Revelation, the silence and patience of these
Our brothers of orchard and hill, the unhurrying trees,
To better the burden of earth till the dark suns freeze,
Shall go out to the stars with the sound of Acadian seas,
And the scent of the wood-flowers blowing about their great knees.

To-night when Altair and Alshain are ruling the West,
Whence Boötes is driving his dogs to long hunting addressed ;

ABOVE THE GASPEREAU

With Alioth sheer over Blomidon standing at rest ;
When Algol is leading the Pleiades over the crest
Of the magical East, and the South puts Alpherat to test
With Menkar just risen ; will come, like a sigh from Earth's breast,
The first sob of the tide turning home,—one distraught in his quest
For ever, and calling for ever the wind in the west.

And to-night there will answer the ghost of a sigh on the hill,
So small you would say, Is it wind, or the frost with a will
Walking down through the woods, and to-morrow shall show us his skill
In yellows and reds? So noiseless, it hardly will thrill
The timorous aspens, which tremble when all else is still ;
Yet the orchards will know, and the firs be aware on the hill.

' O Night, I am old, I endure. Since my being began,
When out of the dark thy aurora spread up like a fan,
I have founded the lands and the islands ; the hills are my plan.
I have covered the pits of the earth with my bridge of one span.
From the Horn to Dunedin unbroken my long rollers ran,
From Pentland and Fastnet and Foyle to Bras d'Or and Manan,
To dredge and upbuild for the creatures of tribe and of clan.
Lo, now who shall end the contriving my fingers began ?'

Then the little wind that blows from the great star-drift
Will answer : ' Thou tide in the least of the planets I lift,
Consider the journeys of light. Are thy journeyings swift ?
Thy sands are as smoke to the star-banks I huddle and shift.
Peace ! I have seeds of the grasses to scatter and sift.
I have freighting to do for the weed and the frail thistle drift.

' O ye apples and firs, great and small are as one in the end.
Because ye had life to the full, and spared not to spend ;
Because ye had love of your kind, to cherish and fend ;
Held hard the good instinct to thrive, cleaving close to life's trend ;

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Nor questioned where impulse had origin,—purpose might tend ;
Now, beauty is yours, and the freedom whose promptings transcend
Attainment for ever, in death with new being to blend.
O ye orchards and woods, death is naught, love is all in the end.'

Ah, friend of mine over the sea, shall we not discern,
In the life of our brother the beech and our sister the fern,
As St. Francis would call them (his Minorites, too, would we learn !)
In death but a door to new being no creature may spurn,
But must enter for beauty's completion,—pass up in his turn
To the last round of joy, yours and mine, whence to think and discern ?

Who shall say 'the last round'? Have I passed by the exit of soul?
From behind the tall door that swings outward, replies no patrol
To our restless *Qui vive?* when is paid each implacable toll.
Not a fin of the tribes shall return, having cleared the great shoal ;
Not a wing of the migrants come back from below the dark knoll ;
Yet the zest of the flight and the swimming who fails to extol ?
Saith the Riddle, 'The parts are all plain ; ye may guess at the whole.'
I guess, 'Immortality, knowledge, survival of Soul.'

To-night, with the orchards below and the firs on the hill
Asleep in the long solemn moonlight and taking no ill,
A hand will open the sluice of the great sea-mill,—
Start the gear and the belts of the tide. Then a murmur will fill
The hollows of midnight with sound, when all else is still,
And stray through the dream of the sunflowers here on the hill.

BAHAMAN

Bahaman

To T. B. M.

IN the crowd that thronged the pierhead, come to see their friends take ship
For new ventures in seafaring, when the hawsers were let slip
And we swung out in the current, with good-byes on every lip,

'Midst the waving caps and kisses, as we dropped down with the tide
And the faces blurred and faded, last of all your hand I spied
Signalling, Farewell, Good fortune ! then my heart rose up and cried :

' While the world holds one such comrade, whose sweet durable regard
Would so speed my safe departure, lest home-leaving should be hard,
What care I who keeps the ferry, whether Charon or Cunard !'

Then we cleared the bar, and laid her on the course, the thousand miles
From the Hook to the Bahamas, from midwinter to the isles
Where frost never laid a finger, and eternal summer smiles.

Three days through the surly storm-beat, while the surf-heads threshed and flew,
And the rolling mountains thundered to the trample of the screw,
The black liner heaved and scuffled and strained on, as if she knew.

On the fourth, the round blue morning sparkled there, all light and breeze,
Clean and tenuous as a bubble blown from two immensities,
Shot and coloured with sheer sunlight and the magic of those seas.

In that bright new world of wonder, it was life enough to laze
All day underneath the awnings, and through half-shut eyes to gaze
At the marvel of the sea-blue ; and I faltered for a phrase

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Should half give you the impression, tell you how the very tint
Justified your finest daring, as if Nature gave the hint,
'Plodders, see Imagination set his pallet without stint !'

Cobalt, gobelin, and azure, turquoise, sapphire, indigo,
Changing from the spectral bluish of a shadow upon snow
To the deep of Canton china,—one unfathomable glow.

And the flying-fish,—to see them in a scurry lift and flee,
Silvery as the foam they sprang from, fragile people of the sea,
Whom their heart's great aspiration for a moment had set free.

From the dim and cloudy ocean, thunder-centred, rosy-verged,
At the lord sun's *Sursum Corda*, as implicit impulse urged,
Frail as vapour, fine as music, these bright spirit-things emerged ;

Like those flocks of small white snowbirds we have seen start up before
Our brisk walk in winter weather by the snowy Scituate shore ;
And the tiny shining sea-folk brought you back to me once more.

So we ran down Abaco ; and passing that tall sentinel
Black against the sundown, sighted, as the sudden twilight fell,
Nassau light ; and the warm darkness breathed on us from breeze and swell.

Stand-by bell and stop of engine ; clank of anchor going down ;
And we're riding in the roadstead off a twinkling-lighted town,
Low dark shore with boom of breakers and white beach the palm-trees crown.

In the soft wash of the sea air, on the long swing of the tide,
Here for once the dream came true, the voyage ended close beside
The Hesperides in moonlight on mid-ocean where they ride !

And those Hesperidean joy-lands were not strange to you and me.
Just beyond the lost horizon, every time we looked to sea
From Testudo, there they floated, looming plain as plain could be.

BAHAMAN

Who believed us? 'Myth and fable are a science in our time.'
'Never saw the sea that colour.' 'Never heard of such a rhyme.'
Well, we've proved it, prince of idlers,—knowledge wrong and faith sublime.

Right were you to follow fancy, give the vaguer instinct room
In a heaven of clear colour, where the spirit might assume
All her elemental beauty, past the fact of sky or bloom.

Paint the vision, not the view,—the touch that bids the sense good-bye,
Lifting spirit at a bound beyond the frontiers of the eye,
To suburb unguessed dominions of the soul's credulity.

Never yet was painter, poet, born content with things that are,—
Must divine from every beauty other beauties greater far,
Till the arc of truth be circled, and her lantern blaze, a star.

This alone is art's ambition, to arrest with form and hue
Dominant ungrasped ideals, known to credence, hid from view,
In a mimic of creation,—to the life, yet fairer too,—

Where the soul may take her pleasure, contemplate perfection's plan,
And returning bring the tidings of his heritage to man,—
News of continents uncharted she has stood tip-toe to scan.

So she fires his gorgeous fancy with a cadence, with a line,
Till the artist wakes within him, and the toiler grows divine,
Shaping the rough world about him nearer to some fair design.

Every heart must have its Indies,—an inheritance unclaimed
In the unsubstantial treasure of a province never named,
Loved and longed for through a lifetime, dull, laborious, and unfamed,

Never wholly disillusioned. *Spiritus, read, haeres sit*
Patriæ quæ tristia nescit. This alone the great king writ
O'er the tomb of her he cherished in this fair world she must quit.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Love in one farewell for ever, taking counsel to implore
Best of human benedictions on its dead, could ask no more.
The heart's country for a dwelling, this at last is all our lore.

But the fairies at your cradle gave you craft to build a home
In the wide bright world of colour, with the cunning of a gnome ;
Blessed you so above your fellows of the tribe that still must roam.

Still across the world they go, tormented by a strange unrest,
And the unabiding spirit knocks for ever at their breast,
Bidding them away to fortune in some undiscovered West ;

While at home you sit and call the Orient up at your command,
Master of the iris seas and Prospero of the purple land.
Listen, here was one world-corner matched the cunning of your hand.

Not, my friend, since we were children, and all wonder-tales were true,—
Jason, Hengest, Hiawatha, fairy prince or pirate crew—
Was there ever such a landing in a country strange and new?

Up the harbour where there gathered, fought and revelled many a year,
Swarthy Spaniard, lost Lucayan, Loyalist, and Buccaneer,
'Once upon a time' was now, and 'far across the sea' was here.

Tropic moonlight, in great floods and fathoms pouring through the trees
On a ground as white as sea-froth its fantastic trceries,
While the poincianas, rustling like the rain, moved in the breeze,

Showed a city, coral-streeted, melting in the mellow shine,
Built of creamstone and enchantment, fairy work in every line,
In a velvet atmosphere that bids the heart her haste resign.

Thanks to Julian Hospitator, saint of travellers by sea,
Roving minstrels and all boatmen,—just such vagabonds as we—
On the shaded wharf we landed, rich in leisure, hale and free.

BAHAMAN

What more would you for God's creatures, but the little tide of sleep?
In a clean white room I wakened, saw the careless sunlight peep
Through the roses at the window, lay and listened to the creep

Of the soft wind in the shutters, heard the palm-tops stirring high,
And that strange mysterious shuffle of the slipshod foot go by.
In a world all glad with colour, gladdest of all things was I ;

In a quiet convent garden, tranquil as the day is long,
Here to sit without intrusion of the world or strife or wrong,—
Watch the lizards chase each other, and the green bird make his song ;

Warmed and freshened, lulled yet quickened in that Paradisal air,
Motherly and uncapricious, healing every hurt or care,
Wooing body, mind, and spirit, firmly back to strong and fair ;

By the Angelus reminded, silence waits the touch of sound,
As the soul waits her awaking to some *Gloria* profound ;
Till the mighty Southern Cross is lighted at the day's last bound.

And if ever your fair fortune make you good Saint Vincent's guest,
At his door take leave of trouble, welcomed to his decent rest,
Of his ordered peace partaker, by his solace healed and blessed ;

Where this flowered cloister garden, hidden from the passing view,
Lies behind its yellow walls in prayer the holy hours through :
And beyond, that fairy harbour, floored in malachite and blue.

In that old white-streeted city gladness has her way at last
Under burdens finely poised, and with a freedom unsurpassed,
Move the naked-footed bearers in the blue day deep and vast.

This is Bay Street broad and low-built, basking in its quiet trade ;
Here the sponging fleet is anchored ; here shell trinkets are displayed ;
Here the cable news is posted daily ; here the market's made,

BALLADS AND LYRICS

With its oranges from Andros, heaps of yam and tamarind,
Red-juiced shadducks from the Current, ripened in the long trade-wind,
Gaudy fish from their sea-gardens, yellow-tailed and azure-finned.

Here a group of diving boys in bronze and ivory, bright and slim,
Sparkling copper in the high noon, dripping loin-cloth, polished limb,
Poised a moment and then plunged in that deep daylight green and dim.

Here the great rich Spanish laurels spread across the public square
Their dense, solemn shade ; and near by, half within the open glare,
Mannerly in their clean cottons, knots of blacks are waiting there

By the court-house, where a magistrate is hearing cases through,
Dealing justice prompt and level, as the sturdy English do,—
One more tent-peg of the Empire, holding that great shelter true.

Last the picture from the town's end, palmed and foam-fringed through the cane,
Where the gorgeous sunset yellows pour aloft and spill and stain
The pure amethystine sea and far faint islands of the main.

Loveliest of the Lucayas, peace be yours till time be done !
In the gray North I shall see you, with your white streets in the sun,
Old pink walls and purple gateways, where the lizards bask and run,

Where the great hibiscus blossoms in their scarlet loll and glow,
And the idling gay bandannas through the hot noons come and go,
While the ever-stirring sea-wind sways the palm-tops to and fro.

Far from stress and storm for ever, dream behind your jealousies,
While the long white lines of breakers crumble on your reefs and keys,
And the crimson oleanders burn against the peacock seas.

NASSAU, N.P., *March* 1898.

THE EAVESDROPPER

The Eavesdropper

IN a still room at hush of dawn,
My Love and I lay side by side
And heard the roaming forest wind
Stir in the paling autumn-tide.

I watched her earth-brown eyes grow glad
Because the round day was so fair ;
While memories of reluctant night
Lurked in the blue dusk of her hair.

Outside, a yellow maple-tree,
Shifting upon the silvery blue
With small innumerable sound,
Rustled to let the sunlight through.

The livelong day the elvish leaves
Danced with their shadows on the floor ;
And the lost children of the wind
Went straying homeward by our door.

And all the swarthy afternoon
We watched the great deliberate sun
Walk through the crimsoned hazy world,
Counting his hilltops one by one.

Then as the purple twilight came
And touched the vines along our eaves,
Another Shadow stood without
And gloomed the dancing of the leaves.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

The silence fell on my Love's lips ;
Her great brown eyes were veiled and sad
With pondering some maze of dream,
Though all the splendid year was glad.

Restless and vague as a gray wind
Her heart had grown, she knew not why.
But hurrying to the open door,
Against the verge of western sky

I saw retreating on the hills,
Looming and sinister and black,
The stealthy figure swift and huge
Of One who strode and looked not back.

LOW TIDE ON GRAND PRÉ

Low Tide on Grand Pré

THE sun goes down, and over all
These barren reaches by the tide
Such unelusive glories fall,
I almost dream they yet will bide
Until the coming of the tide.

And yet I know that not for us,
By any ecstasy of dream,
He lingers to keep luminous
A little while the grievous stream,
Which frets, uncomforted of dream—

A grievous stream, that to and fro
Athrough the fields of Acadie
Goes wandering, as if to know
Why one beloved face should be
So long from home and Acadie.

Was it a year or lives ago
We took the grasses in our hands,
And caught the summer flying low
Over the waving meadow lands,
And held it there between our hands?

The while the river at our feet—
A drowsy inland meadow stream—
At set of sun the after-heat
Made running gold, and in the gleam
We freed our birch upon the stream.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

There down along the elms at dusk
We lifted dripping blade to drift,
Through twilight scented fine like musk,
Where night and gloom awhile uplift,
Nor sunder soul and soul adrift.

And that we took into our hands—
Spirit of life or subtler thing—
Breathed on us there, and loosed the bands
Of death, and taught us, whispering,
The secret of some wonder-thing.

Then all your face grew light, and seemed
To hold the shadow of the sun ;
The evening faltered, and I deemed
That time was ripe, and years had done
Their wheeling underneath the sun.

So all desire and all regret,
And fear and memory, were naught ;
One to remember or forget
The keen delight our hands had caught ;
Morrow and yesterday were naught.

The night has fallen, and the tide . . .
Now and again comes drifting home,
Across these aching barrens wide,
A sigh like driven wind or foam :
In grief the flood is bursting home.

A NORTHERN VIGIL

A Northern Vigil

HERE by the gray north sea,
In the wintry heart of the wild,
Comes the old dream of thee,
Guendolen, mistress and child.

The heart of the forest grieves
In the drift against my door ;
A voice is under the eaves,
A footfall on the floor.

Threshold, mirror, and hall,
Vacant and strangely aware,
Wait for their soul's recall
With the dumb expectant air.

Here when the smouldering west
Burns down into the sea,
I take no heed of rest
And keep the watch for thee.

I sit by the fire and hear
The restless wind go by,
On the long dirge and drear,
Under the low bleak sky.

When day puts out to sea
And night makes in for land,
There is no lock for thee,
Each door awaits thy hand !

BALLADS AND LYRICS

When night goes over the hill
And dawn comes down the dale,
It's O for the wild sweet will
That shall no more prevail !

When the zenith moon is round,
And snow-wraiths gather and run,
And there is set no bound
To love beneath the sun,

O wayward will, come near
The old mad wilful way,
The soft mouth at my ear
With words too sweet to say !

Come, for the night is cold,
The ghostly moonlight fills
Hollow and rift and fold
Of the eerie Ardise hills !

The windows of my room
Are dark with bitter frost,
The stillness aches with doom
Of something loved and lost.

Outside, the great blue star
Burns in the ghostland pale,
Where giant Algebar
Holds on the endless trail.

Come, for the years are long
And silence keeps the door,
Where shapes with the shadows throng
The firelit chamber floor.

A NORTHERN VIGIL

Come, for thy kiss was warm,
With the red embers' glare
Across thy folding arm
And dark tumultuous hair !

And though thy coming rouse
The sleep-cry of no bird,
The keepers of the house
Shall tremble at thy word.

Come, for the soul is free !
In all the vast dreamland
There is no lock for thee,
Each door awaits thy hand.

Ah, not in dreams at all,
Fleering, perishing, dim,
But thy old self, supple and tall,
Mistress and child of whim !

The proud imperious guise,
Impetuous and serene,
The sad mysterious eyes,
And dignity of mien !

Yea, wilt thou not return,
When the late hill-winds veer,
And the bright hill-flowers burn
With the reviving year ?

When April comes, and the sea
Sparkles as if it smiled,
Will they restore to me
My dark Love, empress and child ?

BALLADS AND LYRICS

The curtains seem to part ;
A sound is on the stair,
As if at the last . . . I start ;
Only the wind is there.

Lo, now far on the hills
The crimson fumes uncurled,
Where the caldron mantles and spills
Another dawn on the world !

THE GRAVE-TREE

The Grave-Tree

LET me have a scarlet maple
For the grave-tree at my head,
With the quiet sun behind it,
In the years when I am dead.

Let me have it for a signal,
Where the long winds stream and stream,
Clear across the dim blue distance,
Like a horn blown in a dream ;

Scarlet when the April vanguard
Bugles up the laggard Spring,
Scarlet when the bannered Autumn
Marches by unwavering.

It will comfort me with honey
When the shining rifts and showers
Sweep across the purple valley
And bring back the forest flowers.

It will be my leafy cabin,
Large enough when June returns
And I hear the golden thrushes
Flute and hesitate by turns.

And in fall, some yellow morning,
When the stealthy frost has come,
Leaf by leaf it will befriend me
As with comrades going home.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

Let me have the Silent Valley
And the hill that fronts the east,
So that I can watch the morning
Redden and the stars released.

Leave me in the Great Lone Country,
For I shall not be afraid
With the shy moose and the beaver
There within my scarlet shade.

I would sleep, but not too soundly,
Where the sunning partridge drums,
Till the crickets hush before him
When the Scarlet Hunter comes.

That will be in warm September,
In the stillness of the year,
When the river-blue is deepest
And the other world is near.

When the apples burn their reddest
And the corn is in the sheaves,
I shall stir and waken lightly
At a footfall in the leaves.

It will be the Scarlet Hunter
Come to tell me time is done ;
On the idle hills for ever
There will stand the idle sun.

There the wind will stay to whisper
Many wonders to the reeds ;
But I shall not fear to follow
Where my Scarlet Hunter leads.

THE GRAVE-TREE

I shall know him in the darkling
Murmur of the river bars,
While his feet are on the mountains
Treading out the smouldering stars.

I shall know him, in the sunshine
Sleeping in my scarlet tree,
Long before he halts beside it
Stooping down to summon me.

Then fear not, my friends, to leave me
In the boding autumn vast ;
There are many things to think of
When the roving days are past.

Leave me by the scarlet maple,
When the journeying shadows fail,
Waiting till the Scarlet Hunter
Pass upon the endless trail.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

A Seamark

A Threnody for Robert Louis Stevenson

COLD, the dull cold ! What ails the sun,
And takes the heart out of the day ?
What makes the morning look so mean,
The Common so forlorn and gray ?

The wintry city's granite heart
Beats on in iron mockery,
And like the roaming mountain rains,
I hear the thresh of feet go by.

It is the lonely human surf
Surging through alleys chill with grime,
The muttering churning ceaseless floe
Adrift out of the North of time.

Fades, it all fades ! I only see
The poster with its reds and blues
Bidding the heart stand still to take
Its desolating stab of news.

That intimate and magic name :
'Dead in Samoa.' . . . Cry your cries,
O city of the golden dome,
Under the gray Atlantic skies !

A SEAMARK

But I have wander-biddings now.
Far down the latitudes of sun,
An island mountain of the sea,
Piercing the green and rosy zone,

Goes up into the wondrous day.
And there the brown-limbed island men
Are bearing up for burial,
Within the sun's departing ken,

The master of the roving kind.
And there where time will set no mark
For his irrevocable rest,
Under the spacious melting dark,

With all the nomad tented stars
About him, they have laid him down
Above the crumbling of the sea,
Beyond the turmoil of renown.

O all you hearts about the world
In whom the truant gipsy blood,
Under the frost of this pale time,
Sleeps like the daring sap and flood

That dream of April and reprieve !
You whom the haunted vision drives,
Incredulous of home and ease,
Perfection's lovers all your lives !

You whom the wander-spirit loves
To lead by some forgotten clue
For ever vanishing beyond
Horizon brinks for ever new ;

BALLADS AND LYRICS

The road, unmarked, ordained, whereby
Your brothers of the field and air
Before you, faithful, blind, and glad,
Emerged from chaos pair by pair ;

The road whereby you too must come,
In the unvexed and fabled years
Into the country of your dream,
With all your knowledge in arrears !

You who can never quite forget
Your glimpse of Beauty as she passed,
The well-head where her knee was pressed,
The dew wherein her foot was cast ;

O you who bid the paint and clay
Be glorious when you are dead,
And fit the plangent words in rhyme
Where the dark secret lurks unsaid ;

You brethren of the light-heart guild,
The mystic fellowcraft of joy,
Who tarry for the news of truth,
And listen for some vast ahoy

Blown in from sea, who crowd the wharves
With eager eyes that wait the ship
Whose foreign tongue may fill the world
With wondrous tales from lip to lip ;

Our restless loved adventurer,
On secret orders come to him,
Has slipped his cable, cleared the reef,
And melted on the white sea-rim.

A SEAMARK

O granite hills, go down in blue !
And like green clouds in opal calms,
You anchored islands of the main,
Float up your loom of feathery palms !

For deep within your dales, where lies
A valiant earthling stark and dumb,
This savage undiscerning heart
Is with the silent chiefs who come

To mourn their kin and bear him gifts,—
Who kiss his hand, and take their place,
This last night he receives his friends,
The journey-wonder on his face.

He 'was not born for age.' Ah no,
For everlasting youth is his !
Part of the lyric of the earth
With spring and leaf and blade he is.

'Twill nevermore be April now
But there will lurk a thought of him
At the street corners, gay with flowers
From rainy valleys purple-dim.

O chiefs, you do not mourn alone !
In that stern North where mystery broods,
Our mother grief has many sons
Bred in those iron solitudes.

It does not help them, to have laid
Their coil of lightning under seas ;
They are as impotent as you
To mend the loosened wrists and knees.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

And yet how many a harvest night,
When the great luminous meteors flare
Along the trenches of the dusk,
The men who dwell beneath the Bear,

Seeing those vagrants of the sky
Float through the deep beyond their hark,
Like Arabs through the wastes of air,—
A flash, a dream, from dark to dark,—

Must feel the solemn large surmise :
By a dim, vast and perilous way
We sweep through undetermined time,
Illumining this quench of clay,

A moment stanch'd, then forth again.
Ah, not alone you climb the steep
To set your loving burden down
Against the mighty knees of sleep.

With you we hold the sombre faith
Where creeds are sown like rain at sea ;
And leave the loveliest child of earth
To slumber where he longed to be.

His fathers lit the dangerous coast
To steer the daring merchant home ;
His courage lights the darkling port
Where every sea-worn sail must come.

And since he was the type of all
That strain in us which still must fare,
The fleeting migrant of a day,
Heart-high, outbound for elsewhere,

A SEAMARK

Now therefore, where the passing ships
Hang on the edges of the noon,
And Northern liners trail their smoke
Across the rising yellow moon,

Bound for his home, with shuddering screw
That beats its strength out into speed,
Until the pacing watch describes
On the sea-line a scarlet seed

Smoulder and kindle and set fire
To the dark selvedge of the night,
The deep blue tapestry of stars,
Then sheet the dome in pearly light,

There in perpetual tides of day,
Where men may praise him and deplore,
The place of his lone grave shall be
A seamark set for evermore,

High on a peak adrift with mist,
And round whose bases, far beneath
The snow-white wheeling tropic birds,
The emerald dragon breaks his teeth.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

At Columbine's Grave

AH, Pierrot,
Where is thy Columbine?
What vandal could untwine
That gay rose-rope of thine,
And spill thy joy like wine,
Poor Pierrot?

Ah, Pierrot,
The moon is rising red
Above thy grief-bowed head ;
Thy roses are all shed.
And Columbine is dead !
Poor Pierrot !

Ah, Pierrot,
Kneel down beside her tomb.
The gray wind of the gloom,
In the world's empty room,
Has shut the door of doom.
Poor Pierrot !

Ah, Pierrot,
Is there not one sweet word
Of brook or breeze or bird
A mortal ever heard,
Could cheer thee—not one word,
Poor Pierrot ?

AT COLUMBINE'S GRAVE

Ah, Pierrot,
A thousand times the spring
Will come to dance and sing
Up the green earth, and bring
Joy to each living thing,
Poor Pierrot !

But, Pierrot,
When all that pomp shall pass
Her lowly house in the grass,
Will any say, 'Alas,
Poor Columbine ; alas,
Poor Pierrot' ?

Ah, Pierrot,
Thy loving tears in vain
Shall fall like quiet rain
For her ; till the stars wane,
She will not come again,
Poor Pierrot.

Yet, Pierrot,
The mighty Mother now
Hath her in care somehow.
Listen, and clear that brow :
'O earthling, grieve not thou,
Poor Pierrot !

'Ah, Pierrot,
Here on my cool green floor
I do transmute, restore,
All things once fair before
To beauty more and more.
Poor Pierrot !'

BALLADS AND LYRICS

The Last Room

THERE, close the door !
I shall not need these lodgings any more.
Now that I go, dismantled wall and floor
Reproach me and deplore.

'How well,' they say,
'And silently we served you day by day,—
Took every mood, as you were sad or gay
In that strange mortal way.'

These patient walls
Seem half to know what suffering befalls
The steadfast soul whom destiny appalls
And circumstance enthralls.

A solitude,
Dim as an orchard, quiet as a wood ;
My six mute friends who stolidly withstood
Tempest and turmoil rude ;

One door, wherethrough
Came human love in little gown and shoe ;
One window, where great Nature robed in blue
Smiled benediction too ;

And one hearthstone,
The kind primeval fire-god made his own,—
Bringing us back the wood life we had known,
With lighted log and cone.

THE LAST ROOM

Here life was spent
To glorify one mortal tenement,
Where freedom turned the key on discontent
And bade the world relent.

Great friendship here
Turned falsehood out of doors without a fear,
And brought the golden age of dreamers near
For one all too brief year.

Good friends, good-bye !
The soul is but a child ; hear its poor cry,
' Remember in what lovers' tenancy
We lived here, she and I !'

Will you forget
Spilt fragrances of rose and cigarette,
And those faint odours more delirious yet,
Marked in Time's margin, *Stet*?

Will you not hold
Some echo of bright laughter uncontrolled,
As water bubbling out of jugs of gold,
Until the world is old ?

With one farewell
I leave you now, with not a word to tell
Where comedy and moonshine used to dwell
Within a brick-built cell.

In days to be
Others shall laugh here, roister and make free,
Be bold or gay,—but no such comedy
As blessed this life for me.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

In nights to come
Others shall dream here, radiant or glum,
Pondering the book God gives us each to thumb,—
Our page to solve and sum,—

But nevermore
Such moonshine as would tread this square of floor,
And for love's sake illumine and explore
The dark at sorrow's core.

'The sad Pierrot
Lived here and loved,'—how will the story go?—
'Caught rapture from the moment's zest or woe,
One winter long ago.

'Here did Pierrette
Throw dice with destiny to pay love's debt,
Gay, kind, and fearless, without one regret
When the last stake was set.'

Peace, peace, fair room,—
My peace be with them still, through shine and gloom,
Who here may sojourn, ere they too resume
This search for house and home.

Now, to explore !
The impatient wind is in the corridor ;
Fate lays a finger on my sleeve once more ;
And I must close this door.

THE UNRETURNING

The Unreturning

THE old eternal spring once more
Comes back the sad eternal way,
With tender rosy light before
The going-out of day.

The great white moon across my door
A shadow in the twilight stirs ;
But now for ever comes no more
That wondrous look of Hers.

Printed by T. and A. CONSTABLE, (late) Printers to Her Majesty
at the Edinburgh University Press





